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LETTERS SENT BY THE INDIAN DIVISION OF THE  
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR, 1849-1903

The 127 rolls of this microfilm publication reproduce handwritten transcripts of communications sent by the Indian Division of the Office of the Secretary of the Interior during the period March 10, 1849-July 24, 1903, and accompanying indexes for the years 1849-1897.

From 1849, when the Department of the Interior was established, the Secretary of the Interior has had general supervisory control over the administration of Indian affairs, with primary responsibility for the conduct of work in the Office (now Bureau) of Indian Affairs. Although correspondence concerning Indian matters was assigned to particular clerks in the Office of the Secretary, a formal Indian Division was probably not established until about 1870. From 1867 to 1876 there was a separate Indian Trust Fund Division, and in 1898 the Indian Territory Division was established to take care of business concerning Indian Territory, particularly the affairs of the Five Civilized Tribes.

Letters were sent by the Indian Division to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, the President, members of the President's Cabinet, Members of Congress, the Commissioner of the General Land Office, Treasury Department officials, inspectors, other Federal officials, State and local officials, businessmen, attorneys, Indians, religious leaders, and others. They relate to legislation, estimates and appropriations, negotiation and enforcement of treaties, investigations, depredation and other claims, education, health and sanitation, land sales and allotments, surveys, deeds, leases, mining, agriculture, irrigation, railroads, enrollment, annuity payments, trust funds, trade with Indians and the issuance of licenses to trade, liquor control, law and order, missionary work, attorneys, administration of the Indian field service, appointments and other personnel matters, contracts, authorizations for expenditures, buildings, supplies, accounts, and many other subjects.

The letters were transcribed into 121 volumes numbered from 1 to 120 with one volume numbered 30 1/2. The volume numbers are the same as the roll numbers of this microfilm publication with volume number 30 1/2 included on the same roll as volume number 30. For the most part, the letters were transcribed in chronological order. During the years 1868-82 letters to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs were copied in volumes separate from letters to others. This accounts for the occasional overlapping of dates between volumes.

Volumes 1-24 (1849-1880) are each indexed. Most of the indexes are to names of addressees and to subjects. Indexes in the volumes containing only letters to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs are subject indexes. There is a separate index volume for the period March 1849-March 1858, and there are seven separate index volumes for the years 1881-97. For the years 1881-82, there are two index volumes, one for letters to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs and one for the letters to others. Thereafter there are single volumes for the following years: 1883-85, 1886-87, 1888-90, 1891-96, and 1896-97. The index volumes have been reproduced as the last 7 rolls of this microfilm publication.

On most of the transcripts beginning in 1880, there are references to related incoming correspondence, and in most volumes on each copy, there is a reference to the location of the press copies, which were

made beginning in 1854. From July 1897 there are indexes only to the press copies. The series of press copies was continued after the making of handwritten transcripts was discontinued in 1903.

Some letters sent by the Indian Division were not copied in the volumes reproduced in this microcopy. These include letters relating to trust funds, 1857-80; letters to inspectors, 1880-82; and some form letters. The making of copies of letters to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs authorizing expenditures was discontinued in 1892.

The records reproduced in this microcopy are part of the records in the National Archives designated as Record Group 48, Records of the Office of the Secretary of the Interior.

The originals of letters sent are often in other record groups in the National Archives, particularly in Record Group 75, Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Most of the letters received by the Bureau through 1880 have been reproduced as *Letters Received by the Office of Indian Affairs, 1824-80* (M234).

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